Schmitt Chosen to Run for Eighth Term as Carmel Supervisor

By Rick Pezzullo

The Carmel Republican Committee recently endorsed its slate for the town election in November, with Supervisor Kenneth Schmitt heading the ticket as he vies for an eighth two-year term.

Joining Schmitt for two available Town Board seats are incumbent Councilwoman and Deputy Supervisor Suzanne McDonough, who is seeking a fourth four-year term, and Mahopac native Steve Baranowski, an accountant and former chair of the town’s Conservative Party Committee.

Incumbent Councilwoman Michael Barile, who pled guilty last month to illegally hooking up to a town sewer district, was not endorsed for a second term.

Schmitt said he is proud of his and the board’s accomplishments over the last 14 years and wants to continue leading the town to oversee the completion of “a lot of unfinished business.”

“There’s no ‘I’ in team. The Town Board is a team. We work well together as a board,” Schmitt said. “We don’t always agree, but we respectfully agree to disagree. I try to focus on the business we need to do. We are elected to do the people’s business. We’ve had a lot of great accomplishments.”

Schmitt said he “firmly believes” town officials have managed the coronavirus pandemic well and tried to help local businesses, particularly restaurants, survive by expanding outdoor dining regulations.

“Mahopac and Carmel is a very strong community. I feel we have done everything we could to put safeguards in place,” he said. “I’ve agreed with the CDC (Center for Disease Control) guidelines, but certainly some of the Executive Orders from the governor were a little bit of overkill and very far-reaching. Some decisions that were made were counterproductive.”

Schmitt emphasized the town has been able to maintain an AA bond rating and reduced the tax rate by 3.75% in the 2021 budget.

Looking ahead, Schmitt said he is excited to see the downtown Mahopac revitalization project move forward, along with finalizing the town’s new Comprehensive Plan next year.

Negotiations are also underway with the Department of Environmental Protection for Carmel to take over the operations of the Mahopac Wastewater Treatment Plant.

“So far negotiations have been very successful,” Schmitt said.

Further down the road, Schmitt said he would like to see the construction of a new law enforcement facility that would also house the local justice court, along with more commercial development.

“We can only deliver what the residents can afford,” he said.
Officials Look to Schedule Second Hearing on Noise Ordinance

By Anna Young

The Putnam Valley Town Board on Wednesday will schedule another public hearing to review the latest changes made to the town’s noise ordinance.

Per the board’s pre-work session agenda for Wednesday, officials will vote to set the public hearing for March 17. This comes just over a month after residents lambasted an original proposal that sought to set a decibel limit on area noise and institute amendments regulating daytime sound in the existing noise ordinance.

Residents had argued during the public hearing that the boards efforts to control daytime noise would violate their rights and limit their activities. The board then voted down that plan and opted to start over a week later. Officials have been striving to amend the existing ordinance after the town received numerous complaints last year of neighbors being disruptive and blasting music for hours at a time.

The towns current noise law doesn’t address daytime sound and fails to place a penalty on those who violate the code. Furthermore, the ordinance doesn’t have a decibel limit, which has restricted law enforcement officers and deputies from effectively enforcing the law, officials have said.

The previous plan proposed a decibel limit of 65 between 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. within any residentially zoned district, and 55 decibels between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.

Commercially zoned areas would have been subject to maintaining sound up to 65 decibels.

While the proposal was in line with neighboring municipalities, such as Carmel, many residents and some board members argued that 65 decibels (dBs) was too low and would restrict homeowners from engaging in common housekeeping activities, like mowing the lawn or cutting down a tree, another recreational uses.

For comparison, normal breathing is measured at about 10 dBs, with regular conversation measured up to 65. A vacuum cleaner is categorized at an estimated 70 dBs, general traffic sounds is 80 dBs, and a lawn-mower is measured between 85 and 90.

An outline of the new proposal states that between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m., prolonged noise levels of 70 decibels or more lasting longer than 15 minutes on any given day would be prohibited. The ordinance would apply to revving cars, loud music, artificially amplified voices, or artificially amplified sound producing devices, the proposal states.

In addition, noise levels exceeding 60 decibels for more than 15 minutes between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. would be prohibited.

While the remainder of the noise ordinance would remain intact, daytime exemptions to the law would include ongoing construction, yard maintenance, yard and construction mechanisms and tools, air conditioners, generators, snow-blowers, hand tools, chain saws, lawn and or watercraft that are not stationary, and one-day celebratory events, such as birthday parties and holiday gatherings.

Furthermore, evening exemptions would consist of air conditioners, generators, all moving land vehicles, tools needed during a weather or national emergency, and one-day celebratory events.

All parties must end by midnight, the proposal states.

The municipality and utilities would also be excused from all restrictions if it involves necessary maintenance, repairs, and any emergency response during a weather event or national emergency.

Violators would be subject to a fine of up to $500 for each offense, imprisonment of up to 15 days, or both. The town would also be authorized to seek injunctive relief to prevent the continued violation.

Town Supervisor Sam Oliverio has previously said this latest draft of the proposal is “very fair” and believes the community will respond favorably to it. He hopes to have something approved by March, previously explaining that noise hits its peak volume in the spring.

Putnam Officials Push for COVID-19 Vaccine for Staff

continued from page 1

our middle and high school students, is ludicrous,” Oliverio stated. “These young people need the social interaction, hands-on learning and participatory education that only in-person education can provide. It is shameful that our faculties and school staff have not all had the opportunity to be fully vaccinated to ensure that the in-person model of education can proceed. I am hopeful that the state and especially the Governor’s Office hears the requests from our representatives and acts quickly and decisively to provide these needed vaccines.”

Meanwhile, Odell announced Friday the Putnam County Department of Health will soon be allowed to administer COVID-19 vaccinations to senior citizens who have no comorbidities.

In addition, Odell said the state has promised to significantly increase the county’s vaccine allotment.

“This is what we have been working toward, the opportunity to dispense as many vaccines as we are allocated, as quickly and as efficiently as possible,” Odell said.

“The sooner we get these vaccines in our residents’ arms, the sooner we get this pandemic behind us, and the sooner we will see our children back in the classroom and our Main Street economy 100% reopen.”

Until now, senior citizens without comorbidities could only be inoculated at one of the state’s mass vaccination sites or a scattering of private pharmacies. Local health departments were assigned to vaccinate only specific categories of essential workers, group home residents, those with disabilities and people of all ages with comorbidities.

On Friday afternoon, Larry Schwartz, who is leading the state’s vaccination efforts, and Dr. Howard Zucker, the state health commissioner, held a conference call with county executives across the state to discuss the policy change. County executives were told to submit requests for the amount of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine they could store at sub-zero temperatures and dispense within seven days to senior citizens without comorbidities. Putnam County requested 3,000 vaccine doses.

A county’s allotment will depend upon its population. Putnam County does not yet know if it will get all that it asked for, or when any of it might be delivered.

“We have the capability to set up a POD to administer the vaccine within 48 hours of receiving it,” said Dr. Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD, Putnam County’s commissioner of health. “When we actually get the vaccine shipment and know exactly how much we have, we will set up a link on the health department website for seniors to sign up for appointments.”

Putnam County has freezers that can store up to 6,000 doses of the vaccine at sub-zero temperatures and Odell said the county will offer space in its freezers to any neighboring counties that don’t have adequate cold storage capacity.
By Anna Young

Seniors could soon have an easier time accessing COVID-19 vaccine appointments with facilities opening statewide specifically for those 65 and up.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that officials will partner with local health departments to open vaccination sites for seniors across the state. Certain facilities will also provide transportation assistance to New Yorkers and special support for paperwork regarding their vaccination.

Cuomo said the state will begin receiving an increased supply of the Moderna vaccine from the federal government starting this week to support this effort.

“We know that our senior New Yorkers are more at-risk with COVID, and it’s critical that we provide them with access to the vaccine right in their own communities, as well as the assistance they need to schedule and get to and from their appointments,” Cuomo said. “By working together with our local health departments to establish these sites, we will help ensure the process of receiving a vaccine is as simple as possible for our 65-plus population and get closer to reaching our goal of social equity and fairness through vaccine distribution.”

It wasn’t immediately known if Westchester or Putnam counties will be home to any of these additional state-run facilities, but vaccine allocation will be increased at area pharmacies servicing the senior population, with pop-up clinics planned for distribution.

Westchester County currently has three vaccination facilities – one that is state-run and two that the county oversees. The County Center in White Plains opened on Jan. 13 as the area’s first state-run mass distribution vaccine site, with the Department of Health, clinic and Westchester Community College also serving the eligible population.

Westchester County has directly administered 74,757 vaccines to eligible New Yorkers at the County Center. The clinic and WCC sites have inoculated 13,906 individuals.

Another mass distribution site will open this week in Yonkers, but it will only cater to Yonkers residents.

“There have been more vaccines available through the federal government than was true a month ago and we hope that number is going to continue to grow,” Westchester County Executive George Latimer said. “The signs are hopeful and it’s moving in the right direction, but we’re nowhere near out of this thing yet and we want to be measured and careful.”

Latimer called the roughly six-week diminution in COVID-19 data encouraging but is still cautious to label the activity a trend with a high number of infections still being recorded daily.

While the active cases, fatalities and hospitalizations are much lower compared to being recorded daily, “The signs are hopeful and it’s moving in the right direction, but we’re nowhere near out of this thing yet and we want to be measured and careful.”

Latimer called the roughly six-week diminution in COVID-19 data encouraging but is still cautious to label the activity a trend with a high number of infections still being recorded daily.

Along with the active cases, fatalities and hospitalizations are much lower compared to being recorded daily. Latimer said, “It is not a dramatic reduction and we’re not at the point yet where we can any way assume that we are out of this.”

Cases of COVID-19 increased by 370 on Monday, bringing the total number of positives to 107,857 since the start of the pandemic. There are now 6,041 active cases, a roughly 500 decrease over last week.

The total test positivity rate is 4.39 percent, with 8,429 tests administered Saturday. Overall, more than two million COVID-19 tests have been dispensed in Westchester in nearly a year.

Four more deaths were reported on Monday, bringing the COVID-19-related death toll to 2,101. There were 47 virus deaths last week, with 425 since Jan. 1.

As of last Friday, there were 340 virus patients in Westchester hospitals, a significant decline compared to the start of February when hospitalizations neared 600.

“We are not in any jeopardy of our system being overtaxed with the downward slope in infection, all of which is good. We’re still at a stable point,” Latimer said.

Putnam County’s total caseload reached 8,989, with 90 additional positive cases recorded on Monday. The daily positivity rate is 3.78 percent, with 768 tests administered on Saturday. Active cases stood at 458.

There have been 86 coronavirus-related deaths since the start of the pandemic, state data shows, with 18 fatalities in 2021.

Statewide there were 6,235 new positive cases on Monday, with the daily positivity rate clocking in at 3.58 percent.

Eighty additional COVID-19 related fatalities have brought the death toll to 38,557.

Statewide hospitalizations stand at 5,307. Across New York there have been 1,636,680 positive coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic.
Pugh Heads Democratic Slate of Incumbents in Croton-on-Hudson

By Anna Young

Mayor Brian Pugh will seek a third term representing the Village of Croton-on-Hudson this November, as two incumbents look to continue their tenure on the Board of Trustees.

Pugh last week received the support of the Croton Democratic Committee and the Working Families Party, along with Trustees Sherry Horowitz and John Habib. Pugh, who was first elected in 2017, is a lifelong village resident who served on the Board of Trustees prior to his stint as mayor.

With the Nov. 2 election, Pugh said it’s imperative that officials continue to work together to overcome the current health crisis and move the village forward.

“Facing the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge few could have imagined, but working with our community, the Board of Trustees has helped see the village government through the challenge, conserving our village’s financial resources while ensuring that essential services are delivered,” Pugh said.

“Now we must work together to build back better by making the capital investments in equipment that our first responders need, completing infrastructure projects like Croton Point Avenue, expanding our tax base and creating new housing opportunities that are accessible at all income levels.”

Horowitz will vie for a third two-year term after being first elected to the board in 2017. The longtime resident is a small business owner in Croton, the founder of Childrenspace, a preschool education center that has provided care to youngsters for over 40 years.

If re-elected, Horowitz said she has a vision that combines the warmth and friendliness of a small town with the promise of a progressive and engaged community. She hopes to continue her pursuit in reducing the village’s carbon footprint, developing workforce and mixed-income housing, and finding opportunities to create a village that residents are proud to live in.

“At this time, when we are being encouraged to reimagine our institutions, I am excited about the unique opportunities we’ve been given to continue creating the village we want to see,” she said. “I am proud to continue pursuing a progressive agenda for the village I love and represent.”

Habib, who was elected to the board two years ago, owns a law firm in Westchester County and has managed other active firms across the nation and overseas throughout his 30-year career as an attorney. He is hoping to serve a second term, saying that it’s an honor to have had the chance to assist in the development of his hometown.

“I’m particularly proud to contribute my previous experience managing chambers of commerce toward helping our local business community relaunch the Croton Business Council,” Habib said. “I look forward to working collaboratively with the board and Croton’s businesses and residents to revitalize the local economy as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

It is unknown at this time if the Croton Republican Party will nominate challengers for the Nov. 2 election.

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Harckham, Mayer Call for State to Increase Child Care Funding

By Martin Wilbur

State senators Peter Harckham (D-Lewisboro) and Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) vowed last week to fight for hundreds of millions of additional dollars to help fund child care centers, many of which have struggled through the pandemic.

Joined by parents and advocates outside the Mount Kisco Child Center last Friday, the two legislators called on their colleagues and Gov. Andrew Cuomo to support a series of actions that would open up slots for additional children and pay the facilities a greater sum.

The most significant proposal would be a $485 million funding increase in the 2021-22 state budget. The proposed executive spending plan maintains child care funding at its existing level, which the senators described as inadequate. By boosting funding, it would create more openings for children, limit co-pays and revise eligibility requirements, allowing more parents to receive subsidies.

Harckham said without affordable and accessible child care for working families, the economy will not fully recover once the wrath of the pandemic passes.

“Child care is not only good for people who are working, it is an investment to keep people productive and contributing to the economy versus having to go on much more expensive mandated services,” Harckham said.

‘Child care is in crisis and help has to come right away.’

—KATHY HALAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CHILD CARE COUNCIL OF WESTCHESTER.

The additional money would allow for cost-of-living raises for staff, raise the fee level from 69 percent back to 75 percent of market rate where it had previously been set and pay providers for a portion of the days when children are absent because of illness or holidays.

Mayor said the fight to obtain needed funding for child care centers and helping working families has been a decades-long battle in New York. Without the help, women, particularly those with young children, may be forced to leave the workforce, she said.

The issue is also emerging as a priority at every level of government.

“So this is a moment of opportunity,” said Mayer. “We are not in an attrition mindset; we need to be in an investment mindset. This is a chance to reset our priorities, invest in child care. Our kids deserve it.”

Kathy Halas, executive director of the Child Care Council of Westchester, said while the governor’s proposed budget has not cut child care for the upcoming year, that level is insufficient. Significant contributions from the state and federal governments are critical.

“Child care is in crisis and help has to come right away,” Halas said.

Harckham said raising the income eligibility threshold is a key piece of his and Mayer’s actions. Two spouses who work full-time at minimum wage would not qualify for child care assistance, he said. The annual gross income cut-off to receive subsidies is $52,500.

Losing the subsidy is a constant fear for Maciel Burgos, who has a child attending the Mount Kisco Child Care Center. Burgos said she never received financial help before starting a family and learning that child care is prohibitively expensive.

“I’m at the top of the eligibility scale right now and I live in fear that I might lose it,” she said. “Without subsidies, I could not afford to send my child to a place like Mount Kisco (Child Care).”

Many facility operators have also been financially stressed during the past year. Howard Milbert, executive director of the Ossining Children’s Center, called the crisis since last year “the most challenging of my career.” Milbert has led Ossining Children’s Center for more than 35 years.

He said while child care centers were mandated to remain open, enrollment has plunged about 30 percent because many families have been fearful to send their children.

“The COVID crisis has forced us to go back to our donors. Two and three times for scholarship assistance,” Milbert said. “Working families should not have to rely on the generosity of their neighbors to make their child care affordable. That is the job of government.”

Should federal stimulus money arrive from Washington, Harckham urged the governor and his legislative colleagues to supplement the state’s share, not replace it. Others hope enough lawmakers recognize the plight.

“Maybe this is the year where we’ll be able to provide appropriate funding and it will become close to a reality,” said Mount Kisco Child Care Center Executive Director Dawn Mayerski.

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Westchester Sports Hall of Famer Charged With Possessing Child Porn

By Anna Young

Westchester Sports Hall of Fame inductee Richard Leaf could spend up to 30 years in prison after he was arrested last week for possessing videos and images containing child pornography.

Leaf, a 72-year-old Somers resident, who is also known as “The Voice of the Westchester County Center,” was charged in federal court in White Plains last Wednesday with one count of receiving child pornography, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison and a maximum sentence of 20 years, and one count of possessing child pornography.

That latter charge carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, according to the U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York.

“Richard Leaf is alleged to have engaged in deeply disturbing sexual communications with minors, and in being in possession of child pornography,” U.S. Attorney Audrey Strauss said. “Child pornography inflicts immeasurable damage upon innocent victims, and this Office and our FBI partners will continue to exhaustively detect, identify, and charge any individuals engaged in this sinister conduct.”

Between March 2019 and April 2020, Leaf posed as a teenager named Alex Bronson to communicate via Skype with a minor, who Leaf believed was 15 years old, officials said. During these conversations, the minor sent Leaf a video of himself masturbating in the shower and a fully nude photo of himself in the bedroom.

In addition, law enforcement officers uncovered almost a dozen images and videos containing child pornography on Leaf’s home computer.

Officials said that Leaf also created fictitious accounts on Chat Avenue, an online chatroom website, and Skype to communicate with minors. The username of some of Leaf’s fictitious accounts include alex bronson; 15; alex15; 15brandon; 914; 14; austinf19; williams.23; dan77771; 7; and Austin A.

“As our society continues to become more reliant on technology, more of our children are exposed to the most despicable predators – those searching out (the) young to sexually exploit them,” FBI Assistant Director William F. Sweeney Jr. said. “As we allege in this case, Mr. Leaf used Skype to chat with his victims, I’d like to stress to parents that although these contacts may occur in a virtual world, they harm your children in the real world.”

He added that predators inflict lasting damage to their victims, and both parents and guardians need to be aware of the dangers their children face.

Leaf had been the announcer for the Section 1 boys and girls basketball tournaments for nearly 40 years. He was also the announcer for Iona College men’s and women’s basketball, Scarsdale and Mamaroneck basketball and numerous tournaments.

In addition, he officiated youth soccer dating back to 1981 and had previously served as president of the Westchester-Putnam Approved Soccer Officials Association.

Strauss praised the efforts of the FBI and its Westchester County Safe Streets Task Force. She added that the investigation is ongoing.

The case is being handled by the office’s White Plains Division. Assistant United States Attorney Jennifer Ong is overseeing the prosecution.

If anyone has information to report or interacted or sent underaged photos or videos of a sexual nature to any of the above accounts, please contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation at 1-800-CALL-FBI.
By Martin Wilbur

The state Senate passed a collection of legislation last week aimed at holding utilities and telecommunications companies accountable for failed storm-related response and restoration efforts.

Legislation introduced by Sen. Shelley Mayer (D-Yonkers) would eliminate the $100,000 cap on fines for each violation related to poor response on the part of the utilities and would mandate that telecommunications firms file an emergency response plan that must be approved by the Public Service Commission (PSC).

Two additional key provisions in Mayer’s bill removes the ability for utilities to argue that they “reasonably” complied with the law and to restructure the processes by which the PSC determines a penalty, including by instituting a list of factors that cause a utility violation. The list of factors includes the extent of storm preparation for which there was advance warning, including whether the company made sufficient use of mutual aid resources, whether a violation was recurring and the scope of damages caused by a violation.

Mayer is hopeful that by hitting utilities in the pocketbook, the shareholders will hold the companies and their leadership accountable.

“My bill really puts teeth into what they can do because getting rid of the cap and forcing them to have a hearing and look at all these factors, they’re going to have to impose fines, and stiff fines, and there’ll be consequences,” said Mayer, whose legislation was largely inspired by bitter complaints from constituents. “The shareholders, I think, when you remove the cap, will lean on the executives to do better.”

The bill was approved 43-20 strictly along party lines. Mayer said she was confident that the Assembly would pass the legislation as well.

However, her measure, to some extent, is competing against a proposal from Gov. Andrew Cuomo which threatens state takeover of utilities that fail to perform.

One of the challenges that Mayer faced was placing restrictions on telecommunications companies because they are largely regulated by the federal government. However, the state can require an emergency response plan be filed and approved by the PSC, similar to what is required of the power companies.

“I think my bill is a big step forward,” she said. “It took a lot of work to find a path.”

Last week, the Senate also approved a package of 10 bills in a wide-ranging piece of legislation. The bills concentrate on adding safety and regulation to protect consumers.

“Protecting the rights of utility customers is essential as the increasing number of severe storms continues to cause outages across the state,” said Sen. Peter Hutcham (D-Lewisboro), who supports the bill. “These bills will provide greater oversight and accountability, while also making utility companies financially liable to customers when laggard storm responses cause spoiled food and medicines.”

Key provisions include:

- Utility Moratorium. Extends the moratorium on utility shut-offs until Dec. 31 or when the COVID-19 state of emergency is lifted or expires.
- Protecting Customers Lobbying Costs. Protects utility customers from unknowingly paying for lobbying activity.
- Electricity Plan for Essential Medical Needs. Identifies the specific medical equipment that qualifies for essential electricity and additional utility outreach during outages.
- Utility Reimbursement. Provides consumers with a bill discount when a contracted service provider fails to provide service.
- Utility Consumer Advocacy in the Public Service Commission. Requires at least one PSC commissioner to have experience in advocating in the interests of utility consumers.
- Emergency Response Plan Requirement. Establishes the criteria for the Long Island Power Authority and its service provider’s emergency response plans, and subjects them to review, approval and enforcement by the PSC.
- Stronger Utility Storm Response. Removes restrictions on the FSC’s ability to penalize utility company violations and enhances oversight of utilities to ensure improved storm planning and response.
- Professional Engineer Approval Requirement. Requires a professional engineer to review and approve a gas infrastructure project to prevent public utility accidents from occurring in New York.
- Public Statements of Compensation. Requires large utility companies to publicly report the annual pay of their top employees.
- Reimbursement for Lost Food or Medicine. Provides a customer reimbursement for lost food or medicines due to an extended power outage.

State Sen. Shelley Mayer saw her bill approved last week in the Senate that seeks to hold utilities and telecommunications companies accountable for storm-related failures. Lawmakers also passed a wide-ranging package of bills aimed at improving service and response.

During severe storms continues to cause outages across the state,” said Sen. Peter Hutcham (D-Lewisboro), who supports the bill. “These bills will provide greater oversight and accountability, while also making utility companies financially liable to customers when laggard storm responses cause spoiled food and medicines.”

Key provisions include:

- Utility Moratorium. Extends the moratorium on utility shut-offs until Dec. 31 or when the COVID-19 state of emergency is lifted or expires.
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Pow Wow Organizer Gil ‘Crying Hawk’ Tarbox Dies at 73

Gil “Crying Hawk” Tarbox, a driving force behind the popular Daniel Nimham Pow Wow in Putnam County which celebrated the Wappinger tribe that lived in the area, passed away recently. He was 73.

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell said that Tarbox, a Kent resident, “put Putnam County on the map” with the annual Pow Wow and helped residents learn about the county’s history.

“We will all miss Gil. There is no replacing his enthusiasm, his spirit and his vast knowledge of the Native Americans who called our county home,” Odell said. “The Pow Wow he helped create has grown into one of the biggest local events of the summer. It not only draws people from all over the country, but also brings the past alive and gives the next generation a greater understanding of history.”

A member of the Nimham Mountain Singers, Tarbox helped establish the Intertribal Pow Wow that is held one weekend every August at the Putnam County Veterans Memorial Park. With singing, dancing, drumming and storytelling, the Pow Wow helps educate young people about the 8,000 Wappinger Indians who lived in this area and their last chief, Daniel Osborne’s “On the Wings of Love.”

On a few special occasions, he could be heard serenading his wife, Aura, to Jeffrey Osborne’s “On the Wings of Love.”

While he will be dearly missed, Ken Carr left those who cared for him with a legacy of loving kindness.

The family extends their gratitude to the skilled doctors, nurses and aides who supported them and cared for Ken. They helped Ken live fully while he was in the process of dying.

Coletta is survived by her parents, Susan and Joseph Coletta; her brother, John, his wife, Jill and their children Aidan, Ethan and Jack Coletta; her three sisters, Kristin, her husband, Charles and their children Janna, Kaliee and Madison Di Vico, Lianne and husband Edward Navedo and Jaclyn, her husband, Dustin and children Cameron and Carter Lucas; and by many loving cousins and friends.

Kenneth Carr

Kenneth Robert Carr, 73, of North Palm Beach, Fla., and New Milford, Conn., embarked on to his next adventure quietly, courageously and peacefully on Feb. 11 at his home near Fort Pierce, Fla. He was one of the last chief, Daniel Osborne’s “On the Wings of Love.”

On a few special occasions, he could be heard serenading his wife, Aura, to Jeffrey Osborne’s “On the Wings of Love.”

While he will be dearly missed, Ken Carr left those who cared for him with a legacy of loving kindness.

The family extends their gratitude to the skilled doctors, nurses and aides who supported them and cared for Ken. They helped Ken live fully while he was in the process of dying.

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Danielle M. Coletta

Danielle Marie Coletta, a sixth-grade English teacher at Mildred E. Strang Middle School in Yorktown, died unexpectedly on Feb. 22 with her family holding her hands. She was 48.

She was a gregarious, caring and active person, and with his wife, Helen, especially enjoyed square dancing with Tarry Squares, round dancing and clogging with the Tusker Trumppers. By nature, he was also quite the collector of stamps, and also rocks and minerals. Always curious about people, he was aware of the interests others had and liked to pass on newspaper and magazine articles he thought might be of interest to them. He was good company, shared his dry humor generously and was ready with a crisp short joke for every occasion.

He is survived by his beloved wife, Helen, with whom he shared 66 years of marriage and friendship, and their three children, George M., Julie Sanca and Debbie Lind.

A private viewing and graveside service was held on Feb. 24.

George Vargulick

George Vargulick, a retired elementary school teacher, died peacefully on Feb. 17 at home with his family by his side. He was 93.

Vargulick was born Dec. 25, 1927, in Fort Pierce, Fla. In the Army in 1945, he served overseas in the Pacific theater as a surgical technician. Later, he graduated from Iona College with a teaching degree and went on to have a fulfilling career as a teacher at Van Cortlandt Elementary School, where he taught for 29 years. He was also assistant scout master for Boy Scout Troop 45. For many years he was an active member of the Saint Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church in Peekskill, as well as the Van Cortlandville Historical Society and the Peekskill Volunteer Ambulance Corps.

Otis M. Navedo

Otis M. Navedo, 80, a beloved Pace University faculty member who was a member of the business school’s faculty and one of its most popular and well-liked educators, passed away on Jan. 27.

He was a gregarious, caring and active person, and with his wife, Helen, especially enjoyed square dancing with Tarry Squares, round dancing and clogging with the Tusker Trumppers. By nature, he was also quite the collector of stamps, and also rocks and minerals. Always curious about people, he was aware of the interests others had and liked to pass on newspaper and magazine articles he thought might be of interest to them. He was good company, shared his dry humor generously and was ready with a crisp short joke for every occasion.

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Coletta was born Jan. 11, 1973. She attended George Washington Elementary School in Mohegen Lake, Cooper Beech Middle School and Walter Panas High School in Cortlandt. She graduated from Pace University in Pleasantville with a bachelor’s degree in education and Western Connecticut University where she received a master’s degree in education.

She will be remembered for her devotion to the teaching profession. Her career began at Columbus Elementary School in Hawthorne, and she began her career as a second-grade teacher, followed by many years at Brookside Elementary School in Yorktown as a third-grade teacher. She was a lover of animals and spent many years of service volunteering for H.E.A.R.T., PACT and Guiding Eyes for the Blind. She loved horseback riding, and while attending Pace University, was a member of the equestrian team.

Coletta excelled in her knowledge of computers and was considered by her family to be their resident “geek.” While at Brookside, she was one of the first teachers to make use of the SMART Board in her room and then began mentoring her colleagues on ways to make special use of it. She was always taking classes to broaden her knowledge of various technologies and then incorporating them into her classroom. She was a loving, caring, giving and friendly individual. She will be missed by all.

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No. Castle Ready to Bond for Accelerated Road Repaving Program

By Martin Wilbur

North Castle officials are planning to accelerate the final 24 miles of paving of town roads by drawing on most of a $10 million bond authorization that was approved last spring.

Town Administrator Kevin Hay last week recommended to the Town Board that it borrow $9 million to repave the remaining roads that have not been done since the town began the accelerated program about seven or eight years ago.

The paving would cost an estimated $7.5 million to $8 million with the likelihood of some drainage improvements and crack sealing needed in certain locations that would account for the balance of the expenditure, Hay said.

After consulting with Highway Foreman Jamie Norris, Hay explained that the work would take two or three years depending on the contractor and would also include drainage work where necessary. The paving should help to maintain the roadways' infrastructure work where necessary. The paving would also include drainage improvements and crack sealing needed in certain locations that would account for the balance of the expenditure, Hay said.

If the town borrowed the money and is still paying principal and debt 15 years from now, it would take two or three years depending on the contractor and would also include drainage work, Hay said.

“If we feel at this point, with our financial numbers and our revenue numbers looking pretty good, COVID not significantly affecting as we were concerned of when we first approved this, we recommend moving forward with the paving through bonding,” Hay told the board last week.

The $9 million in borrowing would result in annual payments of $700,429 over a 15-year period, he said. Over those years, the town would likely use money from its annual $950,000 road paving expenditure line in the operating budget to repay the bond. The remainder of the yearly road-paving funds would go toward ongoing maintenance, Hay said, although up to about $300,000 could be needed.

Last May, the board authorized borrowing up to $10 million but has held off taking the money to evaluate its revenues and overall fiscal situation in light of the upheaval caused by the pandemic.

With interest rates continuing to hover at or near record-low levels, it is the right time to finance key improvements, said town Director of Finance Abbas Sura. The annual payments are based on a 2 percent interest rate, which is a conservative estimate, he said.

“This is a good time to borrow money and get any capital improvements done,” Sura said. “So, I feel like it’s a good decision for us to go ahead with this.”

If the town borrowed the money and is still paying principal and debt 15 years from now, Supervisor Michael Schiliro asked how the town would fund any future repaving on roads that have already been completed in the early stages of the accelerated program. Since the start of its aggressive paving schedule, the town has repaved close to 70 miles.

Hay responded that the town could dedicate a portion of any surplus each year toward the paving line. However, with North Castle having done drainage work where needed while completing the paving, there should be less maintenance and fewer problems.

“The roads are lasting longer because we did drainage and we’re already paying attention to the crack sealing and maintenance,” Schiliro said. “We should get more years out of some roads.”

Board members were agreeable to moving forward with the program.

“I think it’s a great project, I think it’s a great idea,” said Councilman Barry Reiter. “I’ve always said that (with) quality of life, roads are key.”

Councilwoman Barbara DiGiacinto said when discussing various municipal issues prior to the town’s aggressive repaving, its Pavement Condition Index averaged in the low to mid 60s. Today it’s above 80, which is considered excellent for the Northeast, Schiliro said.

Quite an Honor

Walter Panas High School valedictorian Vaishali Miriyagalla has been named a finalist in the National Merit Scholarship Program. Miriyagalla received her Certificate of Merit last month. She is among the more than 15,000 of the 16,000 semifinalists to have met all requirements to advance to the final round. Finalists are competing for some 7,600 National Merit scholarships worth more than $30 million.

Patrick J. McNulty Jr. • Patrick T. McNulty • Patrick J. McNulty Jr. • Daniel J. McNulty
Letters to the Editor

Lakeland Has Worked Hard to Return to In-Person Learning Next Month

As district superintendent, I believe the best place for students to learn is in our classrooms. It is important for their academic success as well as their social and emotional growth. I wholeheartedly share the goal of wanting to bring our students back to school as much as possible, but we must do it safely.

I’m writing with some hopeful news as we work toward increasing in-person learning to the greatest extent possible while keeping our schools safe for students and staff by employing best practices to mitigate the coronavirus.

I will present the Board of Education with a series of considerations for increasing in-person learning for all of our students. These considerations, developed with our district physician, call for giving students the choice to attend school in-person four days a week, with Wednesdays continuing as our flex day. Students would still have the choice to learn fully remote at home as well.

For the four-day-a-week, in-person option to be possible, the district seeks to meet two metrics. Using the seven-day rolling average for Westchester County, the coronavirus positivity rate must remain below 5 percent, and the district is targeting 70 percent or more of its faculty and staff to be fully vaccinated. Our goal to begin the four-day-a-week, in-person option is Apr. 6.

When our district physician, Dr. Louis Corsaro, certifies that the metrics have been met, all students could attend school four days a week. The district will reconfigure classrooms to provide three feet of space between desks and each desk will have a three-sided plastic barrier, a protocol permitted by the New York State Department of Health. In addition, every pre-K-12 classroom will have an air purifier.

Next week, the district will begin its on-site COVID-19 testing program, which is voluntary for students and staff and will help keep our schools safe as more students attend.

The logistics of bringing students in more frequently are complex and present challenges that will require flexibility from our families, students, faculty and staff.

If COVID-19 conditions change and the district is no longer meeting the metrics, there may be a need to return to the hybrid model.

I am looking forward to presenting this positive development in our planning with the Board of Education and the community. There is nothing I would like more than for a complete return to normalcy and for our schools to fully reopen to in-person learning. As we continue to contend with the pandemic, this path forward represents our best option under the current conditions. I am hopeful that we will see students four days a week at our schools after spring recess. In the meantime, I ask for the community’s patience and support in continuing to stay safe as we fight the virus together.

Be well and stay safe.

Brendan Lyons, Ed. D
Superintendent, Lakeland Central
School District

Letter Writer Made it Difficult to Determine if MTA Projects Are Needed

In response to Larry Penner’s letter to the editor last week (“Something isn’t Adding Up With the MTA’s Cost for Two Key Projects”), the author knows transit. Not everyone else does. It would be nice if the author provided details is when I can conclude how useful life? Does this new project duplicate previous work?”

It would be nice if the author provided even a rudimentary set of details. I am not a civil engineer or a transit expert, even a rudimentary set of details. I am not a civil engineer or a transit expert, but common sense has me asking several questions. What is the normal useful life for a project such as this? Pre-COVID this viaduct was extremely busy with Metro-North traffic every day. What effect does 22 years of having trains rumble over the viaduct about 20 hours a day have on the viaduct and its structural integrity?

What type of maintenance is required? What type of maintenance is helpful but not required? Did the MTA provide any of this maintenance?

When and if the author chooses to provide details is when I can conclude how necessary this project is.

Nat Weiner
Bronx, N.Y.

Proposed Accessory Apartment Bill is Overreach From Albany at its Worst

Re: Senate Bill S4547, Regulation of Accessory Dwelling Units.

In my opinion, this proposed piece of legislation is just another example of big government’s reprehensible overreach to further micromanage even more aspects of our lives. Each individual locality in our state has its own unique characteristics, which are currently and properly addressed by our local elected representatives.

This legislation would result in egregious ramifications on our quality of life, and would significantly reduce the value of our homes and property.

Edward G. Loebermann
North White Plains

Uncontested Elections Are a Danger to Our Democracy

I have lived in Yorktown for over 30 years and have witnessed and been part of many local elections. Too often I have observed uncontested elections. It is the responsibility of party officials and their district leaders to insure there are prospective candidates for all offices. The people should decide who our officeholders are, not a handful of party leaders and backroom influencers.

This requires commitment by party officials and leadership. A concerted and pre-planned effort should be made to identify qualified candidates – capable of both visionary and strategic thinking who have proven operational experience. As election season approaches, grooming, preparing, testing and encouraging candidates should be a sustained focus.

Uncontested elections are a danger to our town and society. They project the appearance of impropriety, discourage voting, result in disengaged constituents due to lack of choice and too often, poor governance results.

I urge the leaders and committee members of our major parties to seek qualified candidates for this coming election and all future elections. You are responsible for and obligated to seek candidates for all open positions to ensure that a fair, open, honest and democratic election be held for town supervisor, town justice and highway superintendent.

Bob Giordano
Yorktown Heights

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Guest Column

For Schools Struggling to Offer In-Person Classes, the Answer Lies Outdoors

By Michael Peppard

With the November presidential election still in our rear-view mirrors, it is difficult to believe that the 2021 campaign process is already well underway.

Local political parties have met, interviewed and selected their candidates. Petitioning, the process whereby candidates must collect signatures to be on the ballot, begins Mar. 2 and ends Mar. 22. Hence, it is already time that the candidates and issues be on the ballot.

Many of the candidates are running unopposed for village board, town board, or other posts.

I have always been an active participant in our Cortlandt community. As president of my local homeowners group, I was instrumental in preserving a large parcel of open space. Subsequently, I served on the town’s Zoning Board of Appeals. In 2007, I was elected to my current position as town judge. In addition to being the endorser of the Working Families endorsement of the Working Families Party, we are also honored to have endorsed candidates for the Democratic Party.

My background can be summarized as follows: Although born and raised in Manhattan, I have lived my entire adult life in Westchester. I have practiced as a cardiologist, first at Hudson Valley Hospital, where I was honored to serve as president of the medical staff and as chairman of the Medical Board. Becoming more involved in administration, I established both the inpatient medical service (Hospitalist Group) as well as the outpatient Westchester Medical Practice.

In 2014, I was recruited to Phelps Memorial Hospital, where I served as vice president of physician services and established Phelps Medical Associates, an outpatient office-based medical group with 15 locations, from Dobbs Ferry to Croton-on-Hudson. With over 100 physicians and providers, and hundreds more professional staff, I was able to hone my management skills and style. Throughout all these endeavors, I have continued to practice cardiology, now in the multispecialty office I established in Croton-on-Hudson, adjacent to ShopRite.

I have always been an active participant in our Cortlandt community. As president of my local homeowners group, I was instrumental in preserving a large parcel for open space. Subsequently, I served on the town’s Zoning Board of Appeals. In 2007, I was elected to my current position as town judge. Recently, Supervisor Linda Puglisi appointed me to serve as her deputy supervisor, enabling me to prepare for the role of town supervisor.

On a personal note, I met my wife, Terry, the summer before college. We have two wonderful adult children who were raised here in Cortlandt and attending Hendrick Hudson schools.

We cherish this community, feeling blessed to live our lives here, and to have the ability to pay forward these blessings. You will be hearing from my Cortlandt colleagues in the coming weeks, and I look forward to engaging with many of you during this campaign.

Looking Forward to This Year’s Campaign and Engaging With Voters

By Dr. Richard H. Becker

Dr. Richard H. Becker is deputy supervisor in the Town of Cortlandt and a candidate for town supervisor.
Developer, ArtsWestchester Partner on White Plains Sculpture

One of Westchester’s most prominent business addresses, 50 Main St. in White Plains, will soon be home to a monumental sculpture to be installed under the arches of the 15-story office tower owned and managed by Ginsburg Development Companies.

Titled “Fragments of Something Bigger,” the sculpture will measure 17.7 feet in height and be made of polished stainless steel, which was selected for its ability to reflect light. The sculpture, which is currently being fabricated, will be set on a pedestal and surrounded by seating, also made from polished stainless steel. Installation is scheduled for this spring.

The sculpture is the work of Bulgarian sculptor Georgi Minchev, who was selected through a competitive, international, open call process managed by ArtsWestchester. Artists were invited to submit proposals for the site.

Ginsburg Development and ArtsWestchester received submissions from 36 highly qualified sculptors. Three artists were designated as finalists and awarded an honorarium. Each finalist produced a scaled model of their proposal. In addition to Minchev, the other two finalists were David Provan of Cold Spring and Piero Manrique of Mamaroneck.

“We are delighted to partner with ArtsWestchester in bringing exciting public artwork to our development in downtown White Plains,” said Ginsburg Development Principal Martin Ginsburg. “This remarkable sculpture is yet another example of our ongoing commitment to showcasing world-class artwork at our commercial and residential developments.”

Last year, Ginsburg Development and ArtsWestchester unveiled the work of nine artists from the greater Westchester area as part of the company’s investment in its art collection for 50 Main St. The unveiling was part of a grand opening of the first phase of Ginsburg’s reinvention of its office building, which includes a new mezzanine amenity level.

A key feature of the new common space is a contemporary art collection curated by ArtsWestchester that features numerous Hudson Valley artists.

“ArtsWestchester applauds Martin Ginsburg for his appreciation of the important role that public art plays in creating vibrant environments that energize and inspire the places where we live and work,” said ArtsWestchester CEO Janet Langsam. “Our vision for White Plains is an exciting urban center where significant works of contemporary art punctuate the landscape and the built environment.”

Located at the gateway to downtown White Plains, 50 Main St. is a key component of Ginsburg Development’s transformation of the former Westchester Financial Center into City Square, a new mixed-use center.

In addition to the modernization of 50 Main St., the project includes the transformation of the 1 Martine Ave. office building into 188 luxury rental apartments, new restaurant and retail space along Main Street and the creation of City Square Park, a private open space on the roof deck of the parking garage that connects all buildings and features fountains, waterfalls, walking paths, a putting green and outdoor dining on beautifully landscaped one-acre space. The focus on artwork will be carried throughout the entire project.

Ginsburg Development is nearing completion of the newly-renovated and redesigned lobby, which will feature the same level of high-end finishes and artwork as the amenity mezzanine. City Square Park has been completed and the luxury apartments at 1 Martine will be opening this spring.

An artist’s rendering of the sculpture to be installed at 50 Main St.
New Bike Jumping Trails to Open This Spring at Graham Hills Park

By Martin Wilbur

Local mountain biking enthusiasts will have three new trails to choose from this spring at Graham Hills Park in Mount Pleasant to test their riding and jumping skills.

Westchester County, which owns the park, announced last Wednesday that materials are being shipped to construct the trails near the lot on Route 117 across the street from Pace University. County officials worked with a committee of local riders and biking advocates to develop a course after an unauthorized set of jumps was discovered last spring in a forested area about a five-minute walk through the woods from the Saw Mill Parkway intersection with Marble Avenue.

“The mountain bike community at Graham Hills is passionate about their sport,” said County Executive George Latimer. “When we learned they were interested in developing the skills area, we were happy to work with them to develop their ideas and move the project forward.”

The county Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation identified the location for the new trails next to the existing trail and parking lot entrance. Personnel from county parks worked with Jim Dellavalle Designs and the Graham Hills Skills Park Committee to design the trails using proper techniques.

Bob Dillon, a local biker and coach of the Pleasantville mountain bike team that competes in the National Interscholastic Cycling Association, said the collaboration between the county and the committee generated buy-in from the bikers.

“I haven’t heard any reservations from the cycling community that participated in the build of the other area,” Dillon said. “I’ve heard nothing but good things. Everyone just feels very positive that this is going to be as good or better and it’s in a safer location.”

The illicitly-constructed course discovered last year was built in an environmentally sensitive area of the park and presented a danger to riders. In a report to the county last summer, Dellavalle stated that the trails crisscrossed and riders traveled at fast speeds. Lack of signage, which didn’t inform riders of the difficulty of the course, and encroachment into a wetland preservation area that is prone to runoff, posed additional problems, he said.

It is expected that the unauthorized trails will be dismantled.

Dillon said because the new trails will be professionally designed it should have greater longevity and require less maintenance.

Since the previous trail was used by many youngsters, Dillon also mentioned that crossing the Saw Mill Parkway posed a danger. The Route 117 parking lot will make the trails much more accessible, he said.

“We are so grateful to the county for giving a green light to this project, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Graham Hills Skill Park Committee member Jaymeson Leo said. “Moving forward it will be a valuable addition to the park and community.”

The project is funded primarily by donations of materials and work completed by volunteers, said Peter Tartaglia, the first deputy commissioner at Westchester County Parks. Consultant costs is between $5,000 and $8,000, he said.

County Legislator Margaret Santucci. (C-Mount Pleasant) said since last spring there had numerous meetings and calls among county officials and the committee to make sure the project a reality.

“There was give and take on every side. But I’m very, very happy that we were able to come to an agreement, and not only come to an agreement, but clearly things are progressing and moving forward and we want to make sure we get this done,” Cunzio said.

Volunteers from the Westchester Parks Foundation have placed much of the construction material at the new location. The material was donated by Thalle Industries, R. Pugni and Sons, Ad Tec and Mandy Santucci.

Construction will resume when the snow melts and the ground is firmer. The new trails are on track to open sometime this spring.

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Indian Point will close soon after operating for nearly 60 years. We don’t have to wait another 60 years for it to be dismantled.

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Officials Send Message on Importance of Vaccination at Pop-Up Site

By Martin Wilbur

Getting the public vaccinated against COVID-19 has been a struggle for public officials and the millions of Americans who want to protect themselves against a virus that has killed more than 500,000 people in the United States.

Last Saturday, Northern Westchester Hospital and the Village of Mount Kisco made it a lot easier for 200 local residents to receive their first dose.

The two entities, along with Neighbors Link and Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s office, partnered to operate a pop-up vaccination site at the Fox Senior Center. The precious first doses were reserved for the community’s underserved and hard to reach populations who are currently eligible to receive the vaccine, including many seniors who don’t have the ability to travel far, have limited resources or are from the village’s sizeable immigrant population.

“They are traditionally underserved,” said housing, so these are truly folks that have a good amount of subsidized population.

The village’s sizeable immigrant have limited resources or are from

vaccine, including many seniors who currently eligible to receive the hard to reach populations who are

community’s underserved and first doses were reserved for the village can vaccinate its residents,

fantastic,” he said.

participants, which really has been equitable distribute to those in the eligible categories, he said.

executive director. Northwell said Derek Anderson, the hospital’s
division’s underserved and members of the public throughout

Senior Center.

Seniors wait their turn last Saturday to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the Fox Senior Center.

Getting seniors vaccinated is the New York metropolitan area, said Derek Anderson, the hospital’s executive director. Northwell operated 20 different mission-based locations throughout Long Island, New York City and Westchester last Saturday.

Northern Westchester has been servicing as a community vaccination POD the past two months, and when there’s an extra dose, looks to equitably distribute to those in the eligible categories, he said.

“We’ve been able to get firefighters, homeless shelters participants, which really has been fantastic,” he said.

Picinaich said the faster the village can vaccinate its residents, particularly the seniors, the faster Mount Kisco can reopen the senior center, which has been closed for nearly a year.

“Getting seniors vaccinated means that we get closer to opening this center and this is essential for mental health, physical well-being,” Picinich said. “It goes beyond the vaccine.”

Those who received their shot on Saturday will return on Mar 20 for their second dose.

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccine and who is eligible, visit https://covid19vaccine.health.ny.gov/covid-19-vaccine-tracker.
The District Reopening Committee will be considering the introduction of desk shields and other barriers when six feet of social distancing cannot be maintained. Problems such as specific desk shields with Velcro for sled desks are being examined for the high school. Students carrying their own desk shield from class to class is also being weighed, along with other issues that must be resolved before the return to in-person learning.

School officials are also planning three town halls this month to inform the community about the increase of in-person learning. The tentative dates for the forums are Mar. 11 for Bedford Road School and Mar. 16 for Pleasantville Middle School. The date for Pleasantville High School’s town hall had yet to be determined last week but will be held before Mar. 26.

A recent survey that attracted 847 responses from community members, saw 668 parents intending to send their students to school for in-person instruction five days a week. Another 101 responded that they were uncertain about sending their children to school while 78 said they would not return their students at all. Most of the survey respondents are parents of students who attend the K-4 Bedford Road School. Parents will continue to have the option to continue full remote learning.

Superintendent Search
Last week, the Board of Education approved a contract with Dr. Michael Kuchar and Dr. Frank Auriemma from the search firm Strategic Educational Advantage to help conduct the district’s superintendent search.

Kuchar explained the community will help develop a profile of a candidate that will ensure the best fit by creating a district survey for people to complete.

Focus groups comprised of parents, community members and school district groups will be asked the key question about the characteristics they would like to see in the next administrator to lead the district in order to create a candidate profile, he said. The profile will drive the consultants’ screening process, as well as direct the board with their interview questions.

Kuchar and Auriemma aim to have the survey available by this week.

Fox-Alter announced in January that she will be retiring at the end of the calendar year.

The board also approved the retirement of beloved members of the school community, including Director of Athletics John Bauerlein. Bauerlein served the district in that capacity for 12 years.

“You know, when things gel, they go well, so I’m really happy and thank you guys for all the excitement and the moments that this community has provided for me,” he said. “It’s been a wonderful run.”

In addition to his duties as athletic director, Bauerlein also assumed the role of COVID-19 coordinator for the district, which included monitoring in-person learning attendance and contact tracing. The board and Fox-Alter wished him the best and emphasized the impact that Bauerlein has left on Pleasantville.

“So, John, it’s bittersweet but we congratulate you on your retirement and thank you for your service to our kids, to your coaches, to your parents and just for constantly cheering on our Panthers,” Fox-Alter said.
More than 15 years ago, I wrote a Home Guru article about the trend futurist Faith Popcorn (obviously a pseudonym) who coined the expression cocooning, or the trend of people preferring to stay more at home. At the time, as a public relations practitioner, I was engaged in a project with her, but personally was very much doubting her projections, at least for myself. What, me? Stay at home? Never. But today most of us, including me, are now doing exactly that, and it’s not by choice; it’s by demand. The lifestyles phenomenon we are utilizing to turn our homes into work and family entertainment hubs, is aided and abetted by 21st century technology.

The trend today is very much in effect, necessitated and enforced by a nasty virus. Most times a change in lifestyles is a slow evolution and sometimes it’s a big switch. In this case today, it’s a bigger switch than most of us have ever encountered before. This lifestyles phenomenon is leading to the design of official home offices, not just spare bedrooms, and designated. The trend is accelerated by the generous seating areas and a full-service bar. There’s also a pool table, an octagonal gaming table, a darts table, two generous seating areas and a full-service bar. Why leave home to have fun? It makes good sense in a COVID-19 world.

In answer to any argument that quarantine and spending less outside the home will stall the nation’s economy, just consider all the new technology, accessories and furnishings we are utilizing to turn our homes into work and family entertainment hubs. While writing this column on my new iMac laptop, I’m lounging in my pajamas in a comfortable easy chair in my living room, intermittently watching TCM on my large screen TV and, with any leftover brain space, enjoying my favorite recent film, “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood,” on my iPad, while periodically checking for e-mails and voicemails on my iPhone. Case closed.

Bill Primavera, while a writer and public relations practitioner, is also a realtor and voicemails on my iPhone. Case closed.

Bill Primavera, while a writer and public relations practitioner, is also a realtor associated with William Raveas Real Estate. To engage the talents and services of The Home Guru to market your home for sale, call 914-522-2076.
Chorale Provides Creative Outlet, Instruction for Children Singers

By Lindsay Emery

The Putnam Chorale is forming the county’s first youth chorus for children eight to 12 years old, beginning hour-long online instruction this Wednesday afternoon.

Musical Director Jessica Zamek is excited about the prospect of guiding children of that age now and once the pandemic ends.

“For middle schoolers and high schoolers, they have their musicals, they have select choirs, but for this age group, eight to 12, we wanted to offer something that isn’t offered a lot for that age group – really consistent musical instruction and quality pieces and an opportunity to be with those students who are also interested in that,” Zamek said.

The first practice will focus on meeting one another and finding out how much musical aptitude students have, such as whether they can match pitch. It is not an audition, Zamek said, but rather a gauge as to what needs to be taught. It is hoped that they attract children from throughout Putnam and northern Westchester.

During the first month of rehearsals, the students will practice vocalizing, warming up and beginning the process of learning how to have healthy vocal techniques. Zamek plans to introduce the children to a broad variety of pieces and a wide breadth of lyrics. She also wants to teach the students a piece in a foreign language as soon as they commence practices.

In addition to the weekly chorus gatherings, two voice lessons with Zamek are included in each semester’s package. Zamek has been teaching voice lessons for about 20 years and completed her undergraduate degree in vocal performance and graduate degree in opera performance. She currently provides private voice lessons to children at Rye Country Day School and is familiar with online teaching.

“I definitely want to see my students in person, but there’s a lot to be done and it’s certainly better than the alternative, which is no music,” Zamek said.

Although the first month of the Putnam Youth Chorus will be through Zoom, Zamek and Putnam Chorale President Nick Simonelli hope that students can meet in person by next month by following all Centers for Disease Control precautions including singing outside with masks and maintaining social distance. Simonelli believes that professionals should task themselves with teaching youngsters.

“Every discipline, every work, every craft, needs to train the next generation in whatever it is you’re doing,” he said. “I love choral singing and it’s my objective to help promote kids singing in choruses and even release endorphins. I think being involved in a creative community, it really is transformative, and I think that’s one of the things that Nick was also very interested in, is that the adults and the children will be interacting together, deprived of their creativity, Zamek said. She and Simonelli stressed that encouraging the youngsters’ creativity is more important now than ever.

Socialization, even if it is in an online setting, is also crucial for children so that they can develop empathy, form friendships and even release endorphins.

“So, I think that pairing is definitely going to be transformative,” Zamek said. “So, I think that pairing is definitely going to be transformative.”

What are Zamek and Simonelli looking forward to during the inception of the Putnam Youth Chorus?

“I just want to see the smiles on the kids’ faces when they get to sing something for the first time,” Simonelli said.

Even though the Putnam Youth Chorus is a tuition-based group, there are scholarships available for those who qualify.

The weekly rehearsals will begin this Wednesday from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. To register and learn more about the program, visit https://www.putnamchorale.org/youth/.
Program Builds Social Skills, Stresses Physical Activity for Children

By Sophia Spiegel

The COVID-19 pandemic has been overwhelming for many children, perhaps even more so for those challenged socially.

Frances Hernandez’s 13-year-old son struggles with self-esteem and anxiety. However, after enrolling in Build 4 Life’s new Social Skills Program, she has seen tremendous growth in his physical and mental well-being.

“This program has made him believe in himself and showed him he can do things he didn’t think he could do, or want to do, because he was uncomfortable,” Hernandez said.

Build 4 Life’s innovative program is Westchester’s first children’s social skills classes that combines physical activity, social interaction and peer counseling to combat problems children are facing, some of which have intensified during the past year.

Two classes are currently being offered: Introduction to the Building Blocks of Socialization, for ages 4-7, and Building Blocks to Utilize Effective Communication and Socialization, for ages 4-7, and Building Blocks to Utilize Effective Communication for children 8 to 13 years old. The program also includes one-on-one sessions, centered around each child’s interests, for students who could benefit from individualized attention.

Alex-Jamal Burton, CEO and founder of Build 4 Life, a health and wellness company dedicated to helping children and adults reach their full potential, has observed a change in many children’s behavior since the onset of the pandemic.

Build 4 Life CEO and founder Alex-Jamal Burton works with a couple of children as part of a program he developed that improves social skills for kids. During the past year, the pandemic has caused some children’s development to stall or regress.

“It is for any child, not just for kids with disabilities,” Burton said of his program. “It is also for kids that are lacking confidence or lacking the ability to make friends, especially during COVID, since kids are in a tough situation where their prime optimal years of socialization are now being spent over computers where they are isolated from their friends.”

He joined forces with Claudine Gebhard, a social skills counselor with more than 15 years of working with children with learning disabilities as a service coordinator and evaluator, and REP Athletics founder Geoff Rose to design one-hour, weekly in-person classes that are designed to a child’s specific needs. Classes are held at REP Athletics in Larchmont.

“There are so many social skills programs out there, but we wanted to come up with something a little more unique that is not a one-fit-for-all,” Gebhard said.

The team meets with each student and their parents to create a game plan to guide each child toward reaching their goals. The program runs in four-week intervals. At the end of each cycle, progress reports and evaluations are provided to parents to keep them updated on their child’s progress.

While the program is individualized for each child, the students also gather in group settings to form a team. Gebhard, Burton and Rose lead the classes, which are supplemented by peer mentors and specialists, including speech therapists and special education teachers when needed.

During classes, kids participate in activities that are designed to incorporate movement and teach appropriate social behaviors. Gebhard and Burton work to include simple social nuances, such as saying hello to someone when they enter the room and maintaining eye contact when speaking to others.

Burton and Gebhard have found that one of the biggest challenges for children is reading facial expressions and taking social cues from people wearing masks. They have been emphasizing the importance of speaking louder, especially for younger students whose voices are often softer. They work on raising the tone of their voices and using hand gestures to help overcome the barriers of communicating with masks.

Burton said he has seen great strides.

“The sense of community is tremendous because the kids interact more with each other as opposed to in the beginning, when everybody was super shy and wanted to do their own thing,” he said. “Now there is a sense of inclusivity and helping others.”

The Build 4 Life social skills curriculum will support children even after the pandemic comes to an end.

“I think the pandemic is highlighting a lot of shortcomings, but these problems and issues will still be there, and there needs to be a foundation laid for prospering even when we come out of the pandemic,” Burton said.

continued on next page
WMCHHealth Launches Task Force for Equitable Vaccine Distribution

The Westchester Medical Center Health Network (WMCHHealth) has established the Health Equity Task Force (HETF) to help ensure all residents of the Hudson Valley have access to information, education and resources to ensure robust vaccination as the state ramps up COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts.

Westchester Medical Center is serving as the coordinator for the Hudson Valley Region Hub of New York State’s Regional Vaccine Network.

HETF’s goal is to ensure health equity is a priority woven into every facet of COVID-19 vaccination effort (e.g., education, communication, dissemination, challenges, prevention efforts) and that short-term and long-term vaccination program development and implementation reflects an array of diverse community perspectives.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), health equity is achieved when every person has the opportunity to attain his or her full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially-determined circumstances.

“HETF is comprised of community stakeholders and clinical champions representing communities throughout the Hudson Valley. It is an extension of WMCHHealth’s mission to be of service to everyone in our region, and underscores our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as a healthcare provider and as an employer,” said Michael D. Israel, president and CEO of WMCHHealth. “We are well-prepared to build on our strong, existing foundation of community engagement.”

Ensuring Health Equity in Vaccine Distribution

WMCHHealth’s HETF is comprised of 75 clinical experts and community stakeholders, including leaders of organizations serving diverse populations, faith-based institutions and social service agencies, along with representatives from the New York State.

Task force members meet weekly to identify vaccine access and distribution barriers and develop solutions to remove them, particularly impediments that affect underserved communities. HETF is sharing identified issues, along with solution recommendations, with New York State to refine vaccine distribution strategies. HETF’s specific focus areas are available for review at COVIDInfo.WMCHealth.org/Vaccination.

“COVID-19 has ravaged our most vulnerable communities, communities that were already suffering from health disparities and other social inequities,” said Mecca Mitchell, senior vice president, diversity, inclusion and community engagement for WMCHHealth, who is leading HETF.

“Now, these same communities face unique vaccination challenges that must be addressed in a way that is respectful, culturally intelligent, and trustworthy to ensure greater participation in the drive for vaccination.”

Diverse Membership for Diverse Communities

“Neighbors Link is proud to be a part of the Health Equity Task Force,” said Carola Bracco, executive director of Neighbors Link. “We have come to see the stark disparities in education, employment and health care as a result of COVID-19 and it is critical for vaccine distribution to be equitable, safe and fair; particularly for the communities that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.”

“Our next generation depends on us to pave the way for health and restoration,” said Rev. Erwin L. Trollinger Jr. of the Calvary Baptist Church of White Plains.

“The shot is necessary for the past, present and future generations. Let us walk away from the past fears and embrace this opportunity to be healed.”

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Program Builds Social Skills, Stresses Physical Activity for Children

continued from previous page

In the future, there are plans for new classes, such as a girls’ group dedicated to promoting positive body image.

“We want them to be able to work on social skills but also how to face the world and problems that are coming up,” Gebhard said. “We want to provide a place where they feel safe enough to talk about these issues.”

Parent Rebecca Blank, who enrolled her son in the program, said with the year of the weather turns warmer.

class. Outdoor sessions are planned once the safety of students and staff.

There is a maximum of 10 children per class. Outdoor sessions are planned once the weather turns warmer.

For more information and to register for classes, visit https://www.ibuild4life.com/book-online.
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Boutique Offers Eclectic Mix of Garments, Accessories

By Kristen McNerney

It could take months or years for someone to fully realize what career path will bring their life the most fulfillment, and that sentiment applies to Cold Spring boutique owner Judiann Romanello.

Last year, Romanello opened DamnAged Vintage, a carefully curated vintage clothing shop, after nearly a decade working for high-profile fashion designers and trying to figure out her place in the world. But while fashion was simply an interest growing up, her path to becoming an educator opened the door to a world that would eventually become her passion.

While close to completing her dual master’s program in elementary and special education at Manhattanville College, Romanello instead took an editorial position at Glam Danni, a style blog that provided a segue into the fashion industry. “I was always interested in fashion and just old things,” Romanello said. “I didn’t go to fashion school, so I didn’t know what kind of jobs existed. I’m a firm believer in fake it till you make it because nobody knows what they’re doing at first.”

Following her editorial role, Romanello went to work as a temp for South America to make ends meet, Romanello reluctantly took a job at The Westchester managing a Chloé Monaco store before landing a position with Elie Tahari, an Israeli fashion designer, setting up showrooms. Two years later, Romanello secured a position with Cartier as a visual merchandiser.

“When I first day, I showed up to work with a roller suitcase and there was a credit card and plane ticket to Texas on my desk,” she said, explaining how Cartier would send her to as many as three cities a week setting up jewelry counters and accessory walls. “The level of detail was exquisite.”

However, she found the work to be creatively stifling, asserting that her hunger was in fashion. After a year at Cartier, she expressed interest in opening a vintage clothing store of her own and took a freelance position with the company while running a private business selling clothes out of her New York City apartment.

While Cartier would fly her to Texas, Romanello would shop at discount designer centers and pack as many outfits in a bag as possible before her flight home. Back in New York City, people would book appointments to browse the rack of clothes she had set up in her confined living space.

“I would give my customers macaroons and champagne and it would be a lot of fun,” Romanello said. “I think I had three different times setting up had the opening not been delayed,” she said.

Much of her business is conducted online through the business website, which launched during the shutdown.

The boutique is open Thursday through Monday for in-person shopping and provides customers with a nostalgic experience. Romanello said every article of clothing in the store is hand-picked, with a collection of apparel designed to appeal to all body types.

As the business grows, she hopes to cater to men’s fashion.

Romanello added that each piece of clothing is given the proper restorative care, with a special cleansing ritual conducted for clothes that belonged to those who have passed on. She said the ceremony is meant to restore their positive energy and give everything in the store a light and airy feel.

Along with clothes, DamnAged Vintage also offers candles, incense kits and accessories.

“I’m a quirky person and we sell damn good vintage,” Romanello said. “To me, that’s thrilling.”

DamnAged Vintage is located at 109 Main St. in Cold Spring. It’s open Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The boutique is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday.

For more information, call 845-809-5600, visit www.damnagedvintage.com or e-mail judiann@damnagedvintage.com.
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The Evolving State of Winemaking – From Vineyard to Virtual Winery

Still swallowing in the pandemic, I've resorted to re引起ing several columns. Hereewith, one of my personal favorites.

Wine is, in its most elemental form, an agricultural product. To make a decent wine you must be a decent farmer. This axiom has been generally true since the beginning of winemaking, nearly 6,000 years ago. Of course, as with many products, there are exceptions, which is the focus of this week’s column.

In the last 30 years, the winemaking industry has been turned upside down, through modern technology and techniques plus modern entrepreneurs. These influences have infiltrated every level of wine production.

Many wine consumers believe that the process for making wine is similar for all wines. The supposition is that grapes are gently handpicked at the epiphany of ripeness, carefully sorted for rotting grapes, leaves and insects and then lovingly crushed, fermented, aged and bottled, all under the watchful eye of a master winemaker.

It is a far cry from the vast quantity of wines sold in the United States. For the most part, winemaking is big business. Over 80 percent of wines produced and sold in the United States come from about 2 percent of the number of producers.

This is the current state of winemaking in the United States. There are several modern-day business models being practiced, some subtly different from each other, others radically different from centuries-old winemaking.

1. Full-spectrum wineries. This is the traditional model still flourishing around the world – but in diminishing numbers. Entrepreneurs invest in farmland, then plant and tend grapevines and harvest the crop each year. They also invest capital in an all-encompassing winery operation, replete with pressing equipment, fermenting containers, storage and aging barrels or tanks and a bottling line. This operation typically requires a significant capital investment.

2. Buy the grapes but control the wine production. There are many farmers who find immense satisfaction in purchasing high-quality farmland and planting and growing their own grapevines. And there are no shortages of entrepreneurs who would rather stain their hands with grape juice rather than sully them with vineyard soil. By outsourcing grape production, these winemakers are able to focus on producing the final product rather than the raw material. And the capital commitment, along with the annual operating costs, can be far less than for a full spectrum winemaker.

3. The alchemists. These entrepreneurs are interested in producing their own individual expression of a wine, without the burdensome cost and time commitment of growing grapes or producing fermented grape juice. They will outsource grape production and then contract with a cooperative wine-processing facility to crush and ferment their purchased grapes. No sullied or stained hands, and a minimal capital investment. Their primary investment is in barrels and warehouse space. They blend purchased grape juice in their own barrels and then store and age the wine, as they deem appropriate to achieve a desired end product. An outsourced mobile bottling and labeling line completes the cycle.

4. The hobbyists – or the cash-strapped. These entrepreneurs have created what I’ve dubbed the virtual winery. Every phase of the winemaking process is outsourced, typically to a vertically integrated processing plant. A virtual winery “owner” contracts with these firms to purchase certain grapes, process them and place the virtual winery’s label on the bottle. No capital costs, a negotiated annual operating cost, clean hands and the ultimate gratification: your own wine to market. It is estimated there are over 1,500 virtual wineries in the United States alone.

The idyllic image many of us have as we sip a glass of wine is a small winery with rows of owned vineyards surrounding a red-barn winery building, guarded by a frolicking dog and ebullient owner. The truth in many instances is a carefully created marketing campaign of sensual images and illusory labels.

Nick Antonaccio is a 45-year Pleasantville resident. For over 25 years, he has conducted wine tastings and lectures. Nick is a member and program director of the Wine Media Guild of wine journalists. He also offers personalized wine tastings and wine travel services. Nick’s credo: continuous experimenting results in instinctive behavior. You can reach him at nantonaccio@theexaminernews.com or on Twitter @sharingwine.
More than a decade ago, New York introduced an updated power of attorney form with two parts to replace the three- to four-page standard form that was used for many years. The first section listed the chosen agents and the specific tasks (banking, real estate, taxes) to be handled. Part 2 was a statutory gift rider that controlled gifting and asset transfers for estate and long-term care planning. This longer form was supposed to reduce the risk of fraud and provide greater structure and clarity to all the people and financial institutions working with the power of attorney.

In a surprise to no one, the updated two-part power of attorney was overly complex and tricky to properly execute. Another development was more disturbing. The new form wasn’t honored by many financial institutions.

So what happened? Some financial institutions insisted on having their clients utilize the company’s form and did not accept the New York Statutory Power of Attorney form. The problem was—and remains—that powers of attorney because it will be costly to do so. Also, under the new law existing powers of attorney would still be in effect, but new ones will have simpler execution rules. For principals who are unable to sign the form, they can more easily direct another person to sign on their behalf. This is a very helpful development for individuals who cannot physically sign the form due to illness or other circumstance. Furthermore, the document itself will be simpler. The two-part form will be replaced by a single, unified form.

Annual gifting amounts will be raised from the current $500 limit to $5,000. Financial matters related to health care will be covered more completely with the new form. A recordkeeping requirement for agents is also built into the law. We will see how the new power of attorney form works in practice. Hopefully, simpler equals better. Alan D. Feller, Esq., is managing partner of Sloan & Feller Attorneys at Law, located at 625 Route 6 in Mahopac. He can be reached at alan@dellfeller.com.
My Pandemic Palate Continues to Expand

By Morris Gut

Since its founding by the Livanos family in 1994, City Limits Diner in White Plains has become a bustling mainstay along Central Avenue. We completed our COVID-19 vaccinations last week at the County Center, so we decided to celebrate over a mid-morning meal across the street.

After major redesign and renovation in 2012, the popularity of this restaurant only grew, and we had not visited in a while. At about 10:30 a.m. the place was calm. Tables were well-spaced throughout the multilevel dining rooms in keeping with COVID protocols. We were seated at a comfortable booth.

Scanning the menu was appetizing. Just about everything sounded good, including breakfast, which is served all day. It was hard to decide, but I went for a cod fish sandwich served on a roll with a special house aioli (ask for extra aioli), lettuce and tomato. My companion wanted huevos rancheros. Both were satisfying. We shared the large serving of French fries that came with my order. It turned out to be a fine spot to reflect on our vaccine experience.

The Livanos family has brought us so many fine dining experiences through the years, including the upscale Moderne Barn in Armonk. We will be doing more tastings in coming months.

City Limits is located at 200 Central Ave. in White Plains. Open seven days. Info: 914-686-9000 or visit www.citylimitsdiner.com.

New Place for Falafel

Middle Eastern and Mediterranean food is the focus of Falafel Place, a new restaurant and takeout counter that just opened on Mamaroneck Avenue in White Plains. The company, founded by Chef Ori Apple, has another unit on Yonkers’ Central Park Avenue, and a group of restaurants in Manhattan that serve under the name Hummus Place.

Falafel and hummus in its various forms are prepared fresh daily along with pita sandwiches, classic shakshuka and a variety of mezze. The menu states it is vegan, kosher and gluten-free. There aren’t many outlets for these popular traditional staples in Westchester, so I hope it goes over well.

Falafel Place is located at 204 Mamaroneck Ave. in White Plains. Open seven days. Info: Visit www.falafelplaceinc.com.

Brazilian Steakhouse to Open

There has been a lot of work going on at the old landmark Bank of New York building on Main and Church streets in White Plains. Fogo de Chao, a major Brazilian Steakhouse chain with 40 restaurants across the U.S., Middle East, Brazil and Mexico, has been renovating this sprawling space for its flashy version of churrascaria BBQ.

If its restaurant on West 53rd Street in Manhattan is any indication, it will be a sparkling spot for drinks, giant Market Table salad bar and waves of fire-roasted meats served on skewers, churrasco style. If you’ve never experienced this type of dining concept, get ready and make sure you are hungry. It is similar to Texas de Brazil at Ridge Hill in Yonkers. The announced opening date is Mar. 23.

Along with the traditional meat offerings are a fresh daily seafood selection and a variety of fresh-made salads. There’s also a sprawling bar and lounge where it’s Happy Hour all day, seven days a week. The bar menu appears to be reasonably priced. There’s also a butcher shop on the premises for take-home.

Fogo de Chao will be located at 235 Main St. in White Plains. Info: Visit www.fogodechaohao.com.

New Menu, Music Coming to Tauk

Restaurateur Anna Mallozzi took over Tauk Kitchen + Bar last year, the Montauk-seafood themed restaurant in Armonk, and we are told there are big changes on the way, including a new name. Her son, Jonathan Irizarry, is a chef at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. He plans to re-imagine the menu.

In the meantime, Mallozzi is jazzing up the bill-of-fare with a live keyboard on upcoming Saturday evenings Mar. 13 and 20. It could become a regular event. The restaurant, at Armonk Square, is near DeCicco’s Market. You can still enjoy specialties such as bang bang shrimp, lobster cobb, fish and chips, Maine lobster roll, chicken fransese and Fossil Farms’ Imperial rib-eye steak. We’ll keep you posted.

Tauk Kitchen + Bar is located at 402 Main St. in Armonk. Check ahead for hours of operation. Occasional live music. Free parking. Info: 914-730-1144. (A new website is in the works.)

“Searching for Italy” is Delicious

Peekskill-born actor Stanley Tucci stars in an appetizing new series on CNN entitled “Searching for Italy,” a delicious romp through the scenic and delicious Italian culinary countryside. Beautifully filmed and depicted, Tucci visits various cities and towns throughout the boot zeroing in on the incredible food scene in each region.

In one episode he visits Rome and learns how to prepare the proper “vera” carbonara sauce. In another he watches how artichokes are prepared the traditional way in the old Jewish Quarter. My palate is longing for more episodes.

Tucci, who attended John Jay High School and SUNY Purchase, has long been a food and wine aficionado, having once owned a restaurant called Finch Tavern in Croton Falls. He also hosted a series called “Vine Talk” on PBS. His latest cookbook, “The Tucci Table: Cooking with Family and Friends,” which he co-authored with his current wife Felicity Blunt, is available on Kindle.


Easter and Mediterranean food.

Everyone is Irish on St. Paddy’s Day!

The leprechauns are coming! St. Patrick’s Day, Wednesday, Mar. 17, will be celebrated with all its local color. Throughout the region, towns and villages are hanging shamrocks on storefronts and homes giving the Hudson Valley its sparkling moment in the Emerald Isle.

If you want to partake in the traditional foods, spirits and reveling sprinkled with a good dose of blarney, I will be offering dining venue suggestions in my next column. Be sure to check ahead for special hours. Larger groups are advised to make reservations in advance. Takeout and delivery are also good options. Erin go Bragh!

Remember to follow COVID-19 protocols and stay safe!

Morris Gut is a restaurant consultant and former restaurant trade magazine editor. He has been tracking and writing about the food and dining scene in greater Westchester for over 30 years. He may be reached at 914-235-6591 or gutreactions@optonline.net.
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